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7. RECENT SIGHTINGS OF *VANELLUS GREGARIUS* (PALLAS) AT TAL CHHAPAR AND REVASA, RAJASTHAN

The migratory lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* breeds semi-colonially, chiefly in transition zones between *Stipa* and *Artemisia* steppes, in Russia and Kazakhstan (Collar *et al.* 1994). It winters in Sudan, Eritrea, Israel, Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Pakistan and northwest India. Though it is described as regular and fairly common in Pakistan and northwest India in the HANDBOOK (Ali and Ripley 1980), Roberts (1991) calls it rare in Pakistan. According to del Hoyo *et al.* (1996), it is vulnerable and numbers wintering in the Indian subcontinent probably do not exceed 1000.

The lack of recent authentic sightings indicates that it is rare in Rajasthan. Although it is not recorded in the vertebrate fauna of Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur (Vijayan *et al.* 1987), all the recent sightings in Rajasthan are from the Park, Bharatpur where its numbers vary greatly, even being absent in certain years (Per Undeland *pers. comm.*) It seems safe to assume, therefore, that it visits Bharatpur sporadically.

Five birds were seen foraging on October 14, 1995 at Tal Chhapar Sanctuary, Churu, Rajasthan. The birds were exceptionally obliging and allowed us a close approach.

The second sighting of *Vanellus gregarius* at Tal Chhapar was on a cold and windy morning on January 28, 1998. After what initially seemed a hopeless task, we were able to discover a flock of 15 resting birds. All the birds were well

concealed in the hoof prints of an unidentified mammal and were reluctant to move out in the inclement weather.

A flock of 11 birds were seen foraging at Tal Chhapar on February 1, 1998. Unfortunately, some villagers disturbed the flock and it took off, uttering a weak call, best transcribed as *reck-reck-reck*.

During these three sightings at Tal Chhapar, the ground was dry and hard with short grass that was almost dry. Other species noticed in the area were the short-toed lark *Calandrella cinerea*, eastern calandra lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*, and tawny pipit *Anthus campestris*.

A juvenile *Vanellus gregarius* was recorded on January 31, 1998 at Revasa, Sikar, Rajasthan. The bird was feeding on an undulating grassland in the midst of mustard fields. The ground was sandy and soft, with traces of salt at some places, due to waterlogging. Normal human activity was noticed in the area, a shepherdess was tending her flock, tractors and jeeps drove down the road passing through the grassland. Unlike the flock seen at Tal Chhapar on February 1, 1998, the bird was not wary. Other species noticed in the patch were redwattled lapwing *Vanellus indicus*, common sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*, eastern calandra lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*, crested lark *Galerida cristata* and desert wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*.

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and the unending discussions, this note would be so much the poorer.

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8. ADDITIONAL SIGHT RECORDS OF SLENDERBILLED GULL *LARUS GENEI* FROM GUJARAT

The slenderbilled gull *Larus genei* Breme is considered to be a winter visitor to the west coast, west to Sindh, Gujarat and Bombay (Ali and Ripley 1983). Except for one specimen collected by Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) near Bhavnagar, the species was not recorded either from Kachchh (Palin and Lester 1904, Ali 1945) or from mainland Gujarat. However, Mundkur *et al.* (1988) have reported sighting of the species from several locations around the Gulf of Kachchh and opined that it is a common winter visitor there.

We too have seen this species at several places in fairly good numbers around the Gulf of Kachchh (Table 1). We have also recorded it repeatedly from Porbander (east coast of Saurashtra) and Bhavnagar (Gulf of Khambat), suggesting that it is common on the Gujarat coast in general. This supports the views of Mundkur *et al.* (1988).

At Jakhau, the slenderbilled gull along with the lesser blackbacked gull *Larus fuscus* and herring gull *Larus argentatus* was seen resting and occasionally feeding on the fishes drying on

TABLE I
RECORDS OF SLENDERBILLED GULL FROM
GUJARAT COAST

S. No.	Site	No. of birds	Date
1.	Narayan Sarovar	50	26.ix.1992
2.	Jakhau	5000	25.ix.1992
3.	Surajbari	4	4.x.1991
4.	Pirotan Island	A few	8.iii.1980
5.	Charakla Salt Pans	129	28.xii.1996
6.	Okha	2	28.xii.1996
7.	Harshad Dam	2	30.xii.1996
8.	Porbander Bird Sanctuary	3	2.iv.1996
9.	Porbander Bird Sanctuary	6	31.xii.1996
10.	Porbander Salt Pans	6	27.iv.1997
11.	Porbander Salt Pans	36	15.vi.1997
12.	Bhavnagar Port	2	31.xii.1995

the ground. At Narayan Sarovar, the birds were seen flying above the creek. At Charakla salt pans, they were swimming along with blacknecked grebes *Podiceps nigricollis*. At Porbander, the birds were seen both in the sanctuary area and salt pans. Records of this gull during April and June at Porbander also support the view of Mundkur *et al.* (1988) that it may be nesting within our limits, or that the non-